

RALLIES OF THE VOICELESS IN IDRIS MUSA OKPANACHI'S *EATERS OF THE LIVING* AND ENO GRACE NTA'S *SELVES AT WAR*

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Abstract

This paper, “Rallies of the Voiceless in Musa Idris Okpanachi’s *Eaters of the Living* and Eno Grace Nta’s *Selves at War*”, critically examines the predicament of the marginalized in the 21st century. The voiceless in this context has to do with the masses who have been silenced by systemic injustice and prejudice appropriated by the capitalists. By interrogating the predicament of the masses, this paper unravels the strength of the oppressed in the face of the dwindling political misnomer. Through the theoretical strength of Marxism, this paper lays bare the manner with which Okpanachi and Nta strengthen the voices of the marginalized in wrestling capitalism in the society. These poets encoded the plight of the oppressed, the serial carnage and existential threats on humanity as an elixir of the masses uprising. It is in this resilience and manner with which the people speak that Mikhail Bakhtin describes elsewhere as a “centrifugal force”. The assessment of the works of Okpanachi and Nta show that whereas critical scholarship exists in the poetry of most Nigerian poets, there is a noticeable lack of substantial attention on the rallies of the voiceless in their poems. This is why the drive of this paper is built around this critical gap in scholarship. The paper concludes that the writers’ frown at the vileness and depravity of a besmirched society and passionately scream at a country

besieged by negative forces; threatening the peaceful coexistence of the masses and calls for a fundamental interventionist approach to nip this evil in the bud.

Key Words: Marxism, Rallies, Voiceless, Oppression and Predicament.

Introduction

The emergence of new voices in the 21st century Nigeria have strengthened the place of poetry in tackling socio-political problems bedevilling the society. The writers of the era have been at the forefront of emancipation and their revisionist's position on creating an egalitarian society has encapsulated their psyches. The Machiavellian temperament, exploitative leadership, lack of vision, abuse of privileges and disillusionment of the people continue to be the bone of contention within most African nations, especially Nigeria. The inability of the government to limit these excesses usually results in anarchy and revolution. Also, the nation has been ravaged by terrorists, armed bandits, herdsmen and kidnappers. These gangs have also adopted the hit-and-run approach on commuters and vulnerable residents who make themselves easy prey to these gentlemen of the highway. Chinua Achebe's position affirms the frustration of the masses when he states that "...Nigeria can change today if she discovers leaders who have the will, the ability and the vision... (23)". The position of Achebe is premised on the dilemma of masses in the face of our exploitative leaders. From this vantage position, Achebe has rightly opted for a revolutionary action against the country's evil conspirators. Nta and Okpanachi's poetry is a clarion call on all reasonable Nigerians to challenge the debasing habits crippling the people's vision; a vision that inhibits their chances of creating a classless society.

Marxist ideological position shaped the mentalities of the poets and programmed their agitations toward creating an egalitarian society. Charles E. Bressler holds that "Marxism offers to humanity a social,

political, economic and cultural understanding of the nature of reality, of society and the individual” (115). Expanding on the tenet of Marxism, Emmanuel Ngara says that “Marxist criticism is capable of unveiling ideology. It can recall the ideology of text whether it is overtly or implicitly expressed. This is because Marxism reveals the relationship between the text and the external reality, between authorized ideology and dominant ideology of the epoch” (8). It is implicit in Ngara’s assertion that Marxist criticism shows the connection between the text and the external reality. Orji-Mba, Onwukah Benjamin states that “Marxist literature is that which portrays the relationships in the society from the economic perspective. It focuses on the materialist conditions that underlay the different classes in society and which breed conflict between them” (118). African writers strive at stifling the space of the capitalists, confronting the class structure and transforming the society to create a classless society (46). Nta and Okpanachi are poets who belong to a particular historical setting and their critical position on socio-political issues is intricately woven in Marxism. Bressler observes that “...this critical position declares that a critic must place a work in its historical setting, paying attention to the author’s life, the time period in which the work was written, and the cultural milieu of both the text and the author, all of these concerns being related to sociological issues” (116-117).

Marxism is considered appropriate for this research because it establishes the artistic vision of the poet under study in creating social change. Marxism is a doctrine of resistance, defiance, social protest, liberation and quickens the consciousness of an average Nigerian. The poetry of Nta and Okpanachi can be viewed as tools of gaining freedom from the shackles of dehumanization, injustices and oppression. Their poems display a commitment to social problems and interpretation of the sharp class differences which often result in social discontent.

Review of Related Scholarship

Joy M Etiowo and Augustine A Augustine hold that “Like her predecessors, Nta’s poetry interrogate the political gender and moral landscape of the Nigerian environment” (743). They are of the opinion that Nta’s “...first collection, *Prayer for my Children, and other Poems* (2012) deals with her relationship with her children /family. In Etiowo’s forward, she notes that in “*Selves at War*” Eno Nta is really at war with political ineptitude and the politicians who turn our commonwealth into their private enterprise, war with those who denigrate womanhood; war with youths who allowed self, parents, and uncaring guardians to destroy them; war with the generality of a conscienceless society” (Forward). It is expedient in Nta’s poems that all his poet personae speak with clenched teeth against oppression. In her poems, she emphatically gives attention to the indigents and the most oppressed women in the society. Etiowa and Augustine conclude that “However, Nta does not just present the female’s oppressed condition and leave it there” (746). Nta’s doggedness is seen in her criticism against chauvinism as she strives to protect her society and gender.

Idom T. Inyabri and Anthony E Eyang’s critique of Nta’s poetry is witty and heartrending. These writers interrogate issues that are viewed as existential threat to humanity. They note that it is “...through Nta’s poetry, one is offering the general reader a perspective through which one can appreciate the value, function and artistry of a poetic form beyond stymied traditional models that have been handed down from generations” (774). In their perspective, “The poetry of Eno Grace Nta ranges from occasional celebratory to contemplative and satiric. Across the thematic spectrum, the poet persona in her poetry makes epigrammatic statements that the sober reader cannot ignore but pauses to ruminate their aesthetic topical implications” (776). The position of Inyabri and Eyang have not in any way negated the fact that poetries are veritable tools of social reconstruction. They are of the opinion that “...Nta is making a feminist statement by the art of narrative inversion,

where her female poet persona replaces a father figure, as it is the case of the prodigal son..." (780). Inyabri and Eyang's position affirms the fact that women have taken leadership role in all facets of human endeavour but there is a radical deviation on the socio-political issues in the society.

Jonas A. Akung did not corroborate the ideological perspectives of Inyabri and Eyang. In his opinion "Nta sees her society as one that has become morally debased and in dire need for extreme purgation. This purgation, she feels will come home from bended knees in prayers" (790). Akung holds that the "sublimity of language and lyricism which these poems in this collection are written, show Nta's depth of thought, philosophy and classicism which make the collection a masterpiece" (799). He notes that "though prayers are central to the collection, Nta uses poems in this collection to lament the decay in the society, especially as it affects women" (779). Akung's position avidly shows that the plight of women in the society is intricately woven with the plight of the indigent masses.

The poetry of Musa Idris Okpanachi has received several critical reviews on various subjects. To engage the artistic vision of the poets, Senator Ihenyen observes that the poetry collection, *Eaters of the Living* "attempts to portray a nation, ravaged by anomie, corruption, violence and power" (np). Ihenyen's argument depicts a nation that is suffering from a variety of social and political problems, a state of normlessness or lack of social norms and values. In this context, it suggests an institutional breakdown of the socio-political structures and values. Hence, leading to a sense of disconnection and purposelessness among the citizenries. The collection shows a poignant portrayal of a society on the brink of disintegration and collapse. Ihenyen's views reaffirm the decadence that has permeated civility and expertise. He holds that Okpanachi "mirrors the disturbing plight that we found ourselves, in a nation with raped, ravaged and devoured common heritage and patrimony" (np). The summation suggests that Okpanachi's poetry

depicts a nation that is struggling with a range of social and political problems and its negative impact on the lives of the people.

Romanus Aboh in his paper entitled “Modality as a Discourse Strategy in New Nigerian Poetry” investigated the deployment of modality by the chosen poets to interrogate the socio-political relevance of the author’s poetic oeuvre. Aboh states that “Okpanachi urges the Nigerian masses to take positive actions that will lead to their being liberated from the choking grip of the hegemonic barriers” (8). The critic’s position is premised on the complacency of the impoverished masses in the face of pennilessness misery and chaos. Aboh believes that wrestling against the powers that be, will undoubtedly liberate the masses from inept and visionless leadership. He further argues that “Embedded in the poet’s message is the idea that freedom is contingent upon people taking forceful action and that if the ‘will’ is unwavering, the wall of oppression will ‘crumble’. Explicitly, the masses are not only stirred to action, but they are also assured of victory” (8). It is implicit in Aboh’s position that he is in support of revolutionary action against any institutionalized superstructure.

Peter Uchechukwu Umezurike examines Okpanach’s *Eaters of the Living* and other poetry collections to uncover the preponderance of apocalyptic images in the collections. Umezurike argues that the end of military rule does not mean an end to dictatorship and carnage in the Nigerian socio-political setting. His argument is since the poet portrays images, behaviours and ideologies that are synonymous with those of the military junta. He asserts that “The Eaters of the Livingis a poem which, on the surface, might indicate the woebegone days of the military rule, but on a closer reading will reveal that the images are synonymous with the civilian government in recent times” (137). Umezurike’s comment betrays any notion that suggests that total freedom is guaranteed in a democratic regime. The critic bemoans the unresolved relationships and undemocratic policies among the citizens

which he sees as not only traumatic but debasing. The assessment of the works of Okpanachi and Nta show that whereas critical scholarship exists in the poetry of most Nigerian poets, there is a noticeable lack of substantial attention on the rallies of the voiceless in their poems. This is why the drive of this paper is built around this critical lacuna in scholarship.

Protest of The Voiceless in Idris Musa Okpanachi's *Eaters of The Living* And Eno Grace Nta's *Selves At War*

Capitalists are known for their high handedness, brutality, and oppressive attitudes toward indigents, who by extension are regarded as the working class. The leaders deploy manipulative measures to subvert and stifle the space of the people in variant ways. It is in desperation to have a taste of the country's national cake that the leaders indulge in such dehumanising practices and strategies designed to oppress the indigent masses in the society. Recent research has shown that the education sector is in a mess, infrastructural facilities are fast bidding farewell to its occupants and the health sector is gradually becoming a shadow of itself because of the resurgence of visionless leadership and the complacent behaviour of the masses. Anekwe Rita Ifeoma holds that "the crucial and major challenge confronting Nigeria and other developing countries of the world is leadership. The issue of getting the right leadership to propel good governance has been a re-occurring challenge in Nigeria and developing countries in general" (1). In the same vein, Oladipupo Olaleken vented his anger on the leaders in this manner: "Over the time, the quality leadership has depreciated and become a major issue in the establishment of the democratic process and its success" (43). It is this warped and perverse temperament of capitalists that Okpanachi and Nta frown at in their collection of poems. In an interview with Uche Philip Umez, Okpanachi has it that when cannibalism in high places becomes an open national debate on the television you know for sure that morality has gone berserk, which

was what I tried to mirror in *The Eaters of the Living*. The nation and the masses have been eaten by the colossal index of corruption and the weak unity of the nation, and we are collectively hurt" (1).

The poetry of Okpanachi interrogates the appalling degeneration of the social institutions in the country. In interrogating social problems and decadence in the society, Mathew Christensen states that "...the language of inequality continues to revolve around the metaphor of eating and, by extension, cannibalistic corruption" (3). The decadence in this context is multifaceted. The poet persona condemns in strong terms the decay in the country as he rallies the oppressed against oppression in "We give you this Country" when he states that

We give you this country
 Because your heart desires it
 Because it is where you spread yourself
 To defile the land
 To rape the maid
 To change constitution
 Even from your grave (12)

In this poem, the poet persona unravels the hideous practices of leaders who have only one goal: to embezzle and destroy. It is against this backdrop that Patrick Odey Ogar and Josephat Adoga Odey state that the "experience of the people in Nigeria is far from being ideal because of the frustration and disillusionment caused by oppression" (94). The phrase "We give you this Country" is repeated in incremental degree to show the poets' despair for the ruling class. The choice of Okpanachi's poetry acts as a tonic of social awakening.

Following the same school of thought of Okpanachi, Nta who happens to be a matriarch and social critic, uses her social disposition and brave face in confronting the social ills bedevilling the society. Her position is corroborated by Ode Ogude in his paper entitled "Poetry

and Repression in Contemporary Nigeria” when he states that “...because of the very nature of poetry as an art form which gains its effect largely by indirect means, it would have seemed ordinary, surprising that poetry should stand first among the artistic genre...convenient by many Nigerian writers to their purpose of voicing social discontent” (65). Plagued with disillusionment and disenchantment, the poet unravels the predicament of the masses in Nta’s poem entitled “Inequality”. The frustration is levelled against the capitalist who prides on the predicament of the indigent masses and strives to plunder the commonwealth of the masses.

Utomi never knew he was poor
 The raggedy piss dyed mat
 The aluminium tray dinner set
 The Aladdin lamp and smoky kerosene lantern
 The rents in threadbare ill-fitting okrika clothes
 The sandalless feet sparing with the hot earth (33).

Phrases like “raggedy feet”, “aluminium tray”, “Aladdin lamp and smoky kerosene lantern” and “ill-fitting okrika clothes” are metaphors of a society ridden by poverty because of the deeds of the capitalists. The poet parades a nerveless cynicism against the dominant class who happen to be the root cause of the chaos the masses are facing.

Until the day a busy body came
 He said he was bringing religion
 That religion needed education
 That the gods of our land were not religion
 That the age grade competitions were not education
 We said, leave us alone (33).

The “busy body” in this milieu are the leaders who appropriate every means to defraud the masses of their sources of livelihood. The position of the leader has not in any way gone down well with the

masses: "We said, leave us alone". Bressler's position is quite illuminating when he asserts that "To rid society of this situation, Marx believes that the government must own all industries and control the economic production of a country to protect the people from the oppression of the bourgeoisie" (116). In doing this, it is hoped that it will lead to social change and will lead to equitable distribution of wealth in the society. The destinies of the workers are in the hands of the workers as enunciated in the poem. The chains of oppression and exploitation can only be destroyed if there is a systematic bonding by the people, especially in destroying the alleged dominant superstructure. It is against this backdrop that the poet rallies the masses against the oppressors in this seething but scathing comments: "We demanded cars and *alaloks* for ease of movement/We demanded jobs, fat salaries and homes/They demanded the luxury our grandmothers never dreamt of/Government turned against him" (33). "Alaloks" is an Efik name for Okada riders and this happens to be a source of livelihood for low-income earners in the Southern part of Nigeria. The insistence with which the poet deploys the use of the word "demanded" is reminiscent of Bressler's assertion that "if we can remove the blindness placed upon our eyes, the plugs within our ears and walls encasing our thoughts placed there by the so-called upper classes of the society, we will be free for the first time to examine how our own thoughts and allegiances have been manipulated" (114). Nta vehemently frowns at the deceitful and blatant negligence of a people that are not only bullied by the ruling class but subjected to demeaning realities.

In the same manner, Okpanachi unravels the political situation of the country and shows the chasm separating the rich and the poor. The leaders who are metaphors of the capitalists seize from the masses the fruit of self-determination, and most importantly, they (the leaders) are corrupt and insensitive. The poet displays a shrewd denunciation of the capitalists and instigates the complacent masses to be aware of the

insensitivity by this regime of hate. In the poet persona's assertion, such arrogance by the alleged leaders of our country must be confronted with aggression and protest. The masses are the only people who can bring about the desired change as interrogated in Okpanachi's "Where to Stand"

Where do I stand
 To escape your wrath
 For the crime I have
 Not committed
 But for which
 You have tilted
 The scales against me (19)

The commitment to confront the perennial problem of corruption and visionless leadership has been a driving force of change for African poets. Many scholars and critics have identified corruption and failed leadership as the bane of development in Africa. Phrases like "You have tilted/The scales against me" enunciate how Okpanachi recreates the debilitating reality which, particularly Nigerians have had to live with, in a world where inequality, exploitation, dehumanization and oppression are institutionalized. Through his poetry, he creatively mobilizes community power to end abuses and restore the human dignity to the downtrodden.

Reflecting on corruption and bad leadership, Achebe makes it clear that "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with Nigerian character. ...Nigeria has been less fortunate in its leadership" (1). Okpanachi's poetry is a call on all reasonable Nigerians to rise and challenge those depraving habits that cripples the people's dream in order to bring the desired change in a struggling society. Reacting against the imbroglio bedevilling the growth of the society, the poet has unmistakably

hesitated to expose the real eaters of the living in the “The Eaters of the Living”.

Our is a nation of the eaters
 They eat everything and everyone
 They eat the termites
 They eat like locusts
 They eat like cancer cell
 They eat like acid
 They eat the festering sores of the people
 They eat the phlegm
 They eat the corpses
 They eat our names and reputation
 They eat our money (28)

These leaders are synonymous with words like “termites”, “locust”, “cancer”, acid, “festering sores”, “phlegm”, “corpses” and “money” are harsh metaphors of what the leaders do. The termites, locust, cancer, and acid plunder and destroy, just like the leaders. The resultant effect of this destruction is to do terrible things like stealing money, eating corpses and phlegm which the poet persona sees as disgusting. The leaders also masticate the constitution/...gobble the land/...devour the people. These categories of people are not only viewed as corrupt but cannibals who do not mean well for the masses. In a way, the poet is calling on the people to stand up and resist any act of exploitation deployed by the leaders. It is in view of this that Odey Josephat Adoga, God’sgift Ogban Uwan and Patrick Odey Ogar in their paper entitled “Nigerian Pidgin as a Vehicle for Social Reconstruction in the Poetry of Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo” hold that “literature is a traditional channel for self-expression, societal representation and the mirror that x-rays the ills of the society...” (50). It is these ills that are seen in the attitude of contemporary leadership in the country, and this has seriously affected the most oppressed in the society.

In Nta's "massacre", one might expect the poem at worse to be defensive, apologetic, or petulantly lamenting the ordeals of the masses in the face of exploitation. The poet takes a swipe at the haven that the citizenry once occupied.

We used to sleep with doors wide open
 Often all of us together in the courtyard
 We dipped our hands into the same bowl of *tuwo shinkafa*
 And drained down water from a common goblet
 Ibrahim and Chukwudi were called the twins
 And nobody doubted that Suleiman would one day marry Roli
 But all of that has changed (35).

The poet has shown the solidarity and bond that existed among the people from different geographical backgrounds. *Tuwo shinkafa* is a "staple food in the northern part of Nigeria made from rice flour into balls to be eaten as swallows with soup/vegetable" (qtd in Nta, 34). The preponderance of discrimination in our contemporary society has made solidarity gone into oblivion. "Ibrahim" and "Chukwudi", are metaphors of the northern and southern parts of the country: one representing Hausa/Fulani and the other representing Ibos and Yorubas. The spectacle of the hatred and moralistic condemnation by the poet is what great leaders like Tafawa Balewa, Akintola, Okpara and Awolowo abhorred. These men strove "To see Nigeria grow as one nation/But then greed and ethnicity reared their heads" (35). The situation triggered renewed hatred and bigotry among the populace: "And these good men soon sang different songs/Fueled by educational gaps and religious bigotry" (35).

Dissenting voices, particularly from poets like Musa Okpanachi, Tanure Ojaide, Niyi Osundare, and Eno Grace Nta have been at the forefront of the campaign against the division that has become the order of the day. The recent massacre in Edo State is a case in point where innocent Nigerians were unjustly massacred. Josephat Adoga,

Patrick and Nathaniel Ojima Sunday assert that “the masses are at the mercy of these men of the underworld because the leaders who are supposed to be the vanguard of morality are bestriding the camps of terrorism and the people. The confidence the masses reposed on our leaders have also been systematically eroded” (30). The turmoil and blood tastiness that is gradually becoming a norm in the society is what the poet berates.

The land which Aminu made home
 The blood spill could fill a well
 Or even swell a dam from Sokoto to Zamfara
 And now, I hear Muda and Shehu in Calabar
 Are hiding for fear of reprisals (36)

It has been observed that “One little difference leads to massacre /in this land called our homeland”. The only ideology that can strengthen unity and bring the country out of the physical, social and economic depression and divisions is Marxism. Bressler holds that “The time for change was now, ...Marxism provided them a definition of reality and a methodology whereby humankind could redefine itself, society, and the future” (117). The poet is calling for a transparent institutionalization of equality and democracy in the society. In her view, if this is strictly adhered to, lives and properties will be jealously guided and protected.

Marxists understand that with the political class there is an emphasis on the accumulation of capital to the detriment of the proletariat who form the work force of the working class. It is hoped that, since profit is the drive of the capitalist, the working class will be increasingly dispossessed and placed on a very pathetic situation. Okpanachi's poem is a call on the masses to put on the armour of revolution to stop the evil ploy by the leaders who are noted for their devilish act against the impoverished masses. The poet shows his

disdain for a society ravaged by bad and corrupt leadership, oppression, and exploitation of the downtrodden. The decisive revolutionary disposition of the poet against this anomaly is seen in his soothing but scathing remarks in “Our Homestead”

Our land cracks
 In the cloud of droughts
 The harvest is poor
 And our children naked
 With hunger fire...

...Only stubborn hope
 Is the light of my strength
 Ta! our bride has
 Been raped
 At the hour of wedding
 Bastards have spat
 On our beards (18).

The deployment of the word or phrase “Leaking for so many seasons” is a metaphor of a society that has been subjected to repressive policies: “And our children naked/With hunger fire” unravels a society that has been subjected to an insensitive and oppressive regime and hunger. So the poet persona detest the activities of our inept leaders as he addresses them as “Bastards”: “Bastards have spat/On our beards” (18). Okpanachi is in a way mobilizing the masses for ideological and socio-political struggles. The complacent citizens and those sitting on a fence are also ignited to wake up from their slumbers.

Okpanachi becomes sarcastically ironical in “I am not tired”. The poet persona is reeling on the euphoria of bad governance in the poem. He said “I am not tired/Of travelling the same/Cul-de-sac for the /Umpteenth time” shows the weariness of the poet’s persona who is a metaphor of the masses who are victims of this exploitation. “Republic of Sisyphus/And chameleons” is an allusion on post-

independence Nigerian society that is actively inactive and not making any progress. This statement affirms Jonas Akung et al's position that "The invention of the colonised subject, the 'Other', to the European/Western 'Self' deeply affected the self-perception of the colonised peoples" (7). The poet persona ironically frowns at the anomalies in the society and is disillusioned with the leaders who swore oaths of allegiance to defend and protect the citizenry when he states that

I am not tired
Of a sacred dome
Inhabited by infidels
I am not tired of a nation
Without a vision

I am not tired
Of hypocrites... (24).

"A prophet, infidels and hypocrites" are metaphors for fascists whose desire to stir the wheels of our nation in the society is an admixture of greed and imperiousness. The renewed wave of anger exhibited by the poet persona is a product of the oppressive and exploitative system in which the people, especially the indigent masses find themselves.

Recalling Claude McKay's "To the White Fiend", Nta is calling for a revolutionary action against people that are sowing seeds of discord in the society. The poet writes in "It must pass" in this manner:

Every day, the news is not comforting
It's bombing in Suleja, Kano, Maiduguri
Threat and call for Nigeria to split
Call and clamour for Southerners to relocate
Heightening of tension, anxiety and fear (43)

The people are clamouring for change in the society because they have been relegated to nothingness in a society, they all laboured to build. A society that prides itself on bigotry, favouritism, nepotism, and oppression is bound to incur problems. These disgruntled people are agitating for division in the country in which resolution on division is still a far cry. As a result of these dissenting voices, the fates of the people are still hanging in a balance as the poet asseverates

Even neighbours are alert
 No one is safe
 No where is secure
 Nobody is free (43)

The poet differs in her position concerning the place of the masses as she goads them into necessary action. This reaffirms the place of Marxism in challenging the dominant structure that happens to be the root cause of Marxism. Nta is one poet that is dialectically opposed to the deceptive policies and the ideological position of capitalists. It is in line with her position that she rallies the voiceless in this manner:

But the people must lead their lives
 The children must play and romp
 The work of the living is communal
 And like clouds speak rain
 The people must declare no
 To incessant killing and attacks
 Dividends of a failing democracy
 Shrouded in religious bigotry
 To reclaim their land (43)

The confrontational position of the poet has spiralled into a call for revolutionary action against “...incessant killing and attacks”, “...failing democracy” and “...religious bigotry” that she feels is becoming a clog in the wheel of progress. The perceived change supposedly agitated by the poet persona will systematically erase unwholesome practices in

order "To reclaim their land". To the poet, "This too must pass". Nta is a poet whose passion for egalitarianism and personal disposition have triggered renewed hope among hundreds of young poets, writers and critics in Nigeria as seen in her Marxist ideological stance.

Nta also bemoans the predicament of the masses in a society that sees corruption, bad leadership, and oppression as a norm in her poem entitled "Uncertainty". The preponderance of the dehumanizing practices has ignited the subconscious minds of the poet persona as she rhetorically asks: What will my future be? / Where will I ever find a home? (56). Although, the youths are products of a debased society and have been variously accused of crimes which would not have taken place if the right policies and complex dynamics were positively redressed. The people have been relegated to the background and made willing tools and denigrated as expendables: "They plucked me like chicken and tossed me abroad". The irony is that the "adult" who are supposed to be the torch bearers of the society are not living up to expectation and are major proponents of uncertainty in Nigeria's post-independence era. In a way, the agitations of the people are not given cognizance as the lamentation continues: "I long for normal common things/A hug when I ache/A touch when I tire/A meal when I hunger". This heightened negligence is what the poet bemoans as she ignites the most complacent people in the society to rise up and challenge the repressive policies. The poet deploys the use of derogatory words like "fugitive", "serf", "recluse" and "misfit" to unravel the demeaning position in which the people have been subjected to.

But here I am
 A fugitive in my home
 A serf in my kingdom
 A recluse in my youth
 A misfit in my prime (56).

The position of the poet in the excerpt above is a wake-up call on the masses to rise up and challenge their stifled space. The poet persona's position that "No one feels the tears drenching my pillow/Only I know the fear of more rejection", establishes the disdain for a society that she adores and respects. As a result of the disgusting lamentation, the poet persona rants on "But you came unbidden to unlock my cage/Forcing my resistant feet to explode/In frantic exploration of likes and dislikes/To gain a voice and dare to dream" (56). This poem demonstrates the ideological stance of the poet; which is akin to Marxism. The masses have discovered that "...for so long the world's people have been oppressed, suppressed, deluded or cajoled into believing that reality is simply the way things are" (qtd in Bressler, 114). This belief is what has made the poet persona to revolt against the power structure as seen in ... "Forcing my resistant feet to explode and "To gain a voice and dare to dream". Nta is one female poet that uses her poetry to speak to the people from the margins of the society with the sole aim of wiping away bigotry, chauvinism, oppression, and change the world from class brawl to egalitarianism.

Conclusion

The poets are unbiased umpires in a society besieged by uncontrollable forces of hate against our common heritage. The resurgence of ethnic bigotry, sadistic violence, masochistic bloodletting, exploitation and oppression are necessitated by the machineries of an insensitive régime. For the society to be liberated from the tight-fisted grip of the capitalists, the masses must take the bull by the horn. The poetic vision of the poets will not only ignite the consciousness of the complacent people in the society but will also lead to social change and equitable distribution of wealth in all strata of the society.

Okpanachi and Nta have shown the importance of change as a viable literary tradition in Nigerian poetry. Having interrogated the poems, this paper attempts to bridge the scholarship gap and equally

invite further research on the poetry of Eno Grace Nta and Idris Musa Okpanachi. This study will not in any way invalidate their assumptions but strives to survey the liberating roles of the poets in revamping a debased and sullied society.

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